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8 December 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Meeting with the PFIAB to Discuss NIE 11-3/8

- REFERENCES:
- a. Ltr to President fr Chairman, PFIAB, dtd 8 Aug 75
 - b. Memo to DCI fr Asst. to the President for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) dtd 8 Sept 75, SUBJ: Possible Revisions in the NIE Process
 - c. Ltr to President fr DCI, dtd 21 Nov 75
 - d. Ltr to Chairman, PFIAB and Asst. to the President for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft) fr DCI, dtd 2 Dec 75
 - e. NIE 11-3/8-75, "Soviet Forces for Inter-continental Conflict Through 1985"
 - f. Memo to Chairman, PFIAB fr Deputy Asst. to the President for National Security Affairs (Hyland) for General Scowcroft, dtd 4 Dec 75, SUBJ: PFIAB Recommendations for Revision of the NIE Process (attached)

1. On 4 December 1975, George A. Carver, Jr., D/DCI/NIO, Howard Stoertz, NIO/SP, Ray De Bruler, ANIO/SP, met with the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to discuss the Key Judgments of NIE 11-3/8-75 and the Board's recommendations to the President for changing the process for preparation of NIEs on Soviet strategic forces. Board members attending were:

Adm. George W. Anderson, Chairman
Dr. Edward Teller
Dr. John S. Foster, Jr.
Mr. Robert W. Galvin

Mr. Leo Cherne
Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce
Mr. Gordon Gray
Dr. William D. Baker

Also attending were Wheaton Byers, Executive Secretary of the PFIAB and his assistant, Commander Lionel Olmer.

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2. Admiral Anderson referred to the Board's letter to the President concerning NIE 11-3/8-74. Mr. Carver stated that, with the Board's agreement, we planned to spend about 30 minutes explaining the principal findings of NIE 11-3/8-74 and use the remainder of the time to discuss the Board's recommendations and our reactions to them.

3. Mr. Stoertz's briefing was planned on the basis of our understanding that the Board would not have had an opportunity to read the advanced copy of Volume One of the estimate. In fact, more of the members had read it than we had expected. Mr. Stoertz began his briefing of the key findings of NIE 11-3/8-75 and got to the subject of ICBM accuracies, when he was interrupted by Drs. Foster and Teller. (Mr. Stoertz never did get a chance to finish his prepared text.) The remainder of the session consisted of a wider ranging discussion, mainly about (a) purposes of an estimate like NIE 11-3/8; (b) the overall impressions conveyed by Volume One of NIE 11-3/8-75; and (c) estimative methodology as exemplified by the ICBM accuracy issue.

Anderson: Noted his impression that each year we are reporting greater Soviet progress on strategic force developments than we said in the preceeding year.

Stoertz: Did not wholly agree that Admiral Anderson's impression was correct. This year we reported Soviet ICBMs to be somewhat more accurate than we estimated last year, and their ballistic missile submarine programs somewhat more diverse. The pace of their ICBM deployment was a little slower, but we did not think it important enough to highlight this difference.

Foster: Referred to a finding of the NIE that it was possible but unlikely that the Soviet ICBM force would pose a major threat to Minuteman before 1980; Dr. Foster wanted to know why such a threat was unlikely.

Stoertz: Asked to defer an answer to this question, since he intended to address the subject in a moment.

Teller: Referred to the finding that Soviet ICBMs will have better hard target capabilities than forecast last year. Asked if there was any place in NIE 11-3/8-75 where we concluded the Soviets were making less progress than we estimated last year. He noted that if there were any such instances, we apparently didn't believe they had important enough implications to mention them in the Key Judgments.

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Stoertz: There were some instances in which the pace of Soviet progress was somewhat less than we had forecast, as in ICBM deployment. In ICBM deployment we believe the Soviets are trying to balance the pace of force improvement with considerations about the number of ICBMs which should remain operational. But Dr. Teller was correct in that we did not think these changes important enough to include in the Key Judgments.

Teller: Noted that estimated future Soviet capabilities ought not to be based simply on what we observe in photography, but on many future technical possibilities. The US has made major advances in technologies appropriate to missile accuracy. In these technologies the Draper Laboratories are probably the best qualified. Dr. Teller asked whether Dr. Draper had been asked to give his guesses about Soviet ICBM accuracies.

Stoertz: He did not know whether contacts by intelligence analysts included the Draper Laboratories, though specialists in CIA and elsewhere are in regular touch with the US scientific community.

Teller: Asked that the Board be furnished a statement as to whether Dr. Draper or anyone in the Draper Laboratories was consulted by intelligence on this subject.

Foster: Affirmed that intelligence has consulted Draper Laboratories concerning Soviet ICBM accuracies, but not Dr. Draper himself. He observed that there were experts on developing missile guidance systems and experts on analyzing intelligence information. In his view, our judgments on ICBM accuracies are primarily the product of the latter type of experts.

Stoertz: Believed our analysis was the product of both kinds of experts. Intelligence analysts are in regular contact with the US scientific community, but he could not say just which elements they had contacted on the particular subject of ICBM accuracy.

Foster: During the 1960s we judged Soviet ICBM accuracies lagged behind the US, and this was not surprising. Intelligence now says that it will take until 1982 before the Soviets have accuracies comparable to the Minuteman II. What have the Soviets been doing? Why have the Soviets not made more progress?

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Stoertz: Intelligence must use the data we have on Soviet ICBM test programs in assessing these accuracies. Furthermore, with the large-yield warheads the Soviets have on their ICBMs, the accuracies we have forecast give them the capability to pose a major threat to Minuteman silos in the coming years. The strategically significant question is how much accuracy is enough rather than how much difference is there between US and Soviet accuracies?

Cherne: Cited and discussed passages of the Key Judgments, noting that to his eye, this year's NIE conveyed a perceptibly greater sense of anxiety than did last year's Estimate.

Stoertz: Concluded from Mr. Cherne's comments that we had achieved our purpose better in this year's Estimate.

Teller: The sentence at the top of page 3 made him uneasy. (It is possible but unlikely that the Soviets will acquire capabilities that would be perceived as providing them with more strategic power to back up their policies than that available to the US.) This judgment conveys an insufficient degree of anxiety.

Cherne: Standing alone, the quoted sentence might be so characterized, but he noted that the sentence in combination with the two preceding sentences was a responsible conclusion.

Teller: He (Teller) had been too limited in his comment. He should have cited all three of the sentences as objectionable. None, in his view, conveyed the proper sense of anxiety.

Cherne: Could not believe that this document (NIE 11-3/8-75) would convey to any reader a tranquil view of the Soviet threat.

Foster: The pertinent question is what kind of accuracy do the Soviets need for a high kill probability against the Minuteman. Page 9 of the Key Judgments says that the Soviets would be uncertain about the outcome

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of an attack on US Minuteman silos. He did not believe this is correct and noted that intelligence has no evidential basis on which to make that conclusion. The evidence cited about Soviet ICBM accuracies supports two conclusions -- "we have a serious problem or we don't have a problem." Intelligence should draw conclusions that can be supported by the data.

Cherne: He believed the Soviets would face problems and uncertainties in attacking Minuteman silos. He wanted to note that he agreed with the conclusion, also on page 9, that crisis resolutions would probably not rest on the strategic weapons balance, but would depend on other factors, such as the comparative strengths and dispositions of US and Soviet conventional forces.

Foster: We don't know about the problems and uncertainties the Soviets would face in attacking the US. In his view:

- The Soviets would have high confidence in attacking Minuteman. The evidence does not permit a conclusion that they would be uncertain.
- The Soviets have demonstrated the ability to trail US submarines.
- Soviet ABM defenses would admittedly be insignificant, provided they adhere to the Treaty.
- All they need is an AWACS and they would have high confidence in their air defenses. What is the evidence about Soviet confidence in their air defenses?
- The significance of Soviet civil defense is that it would mean the leaders could survive if they decided to sacrifice a few million people.

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Teller: What will actually happen we don't know.

Luce: Noted that the paper explained the implications of Soviet civil defenses.

Foster: The statements about Soviet problems and uncertainties in attacking the US are misleading because they are not based on evidence.

Stoertz: Noted that we have made judgments which we believe are "US conservative," and (as in the paragraph on page 9) have also made judgments which the Soviets are likely to make, judgments which are Soviet conservative.

Foster: History shows that intelligence has always been conservative in estimating (meaning that we had underestimated) Soviet capabilities. What we must worry about is the possibility that the US won't be able to deter. Dr. Foster does not get the same degree of concern from reading the NIEs as he would if intelligence told him the worst case the data will support and the best case.

Carver: Noted in Dr. Foster's statement a fundamental difference in concept with the intelligence approach. We can't give the policymaker two extremes and stop there. We are called on to assess the most likely Soviet capabilities, and to judge how the Soviets themselves probably view their capabilities.

Cherne: On this matter, he would swing to Dr. Teller's side. In the matter of strategic nuclear developments, the consequences of error is so great, that the policymaker requires best and worst cases. We cannot afford to make an "optimistic" error.

Carver: Not being an expert on the intricacies of Soviet strategic developments, he can read the NIE objectively. To him it expresses what we know and

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don't know as well as our uncertainties. To him the communication in the estimate is disturbing; it flags dangers. It contains no polyanna point of view. He noted also that neither he nor the policymaker can pass judgment on highly technical differences about such things as missile accelerometer quality. Moreover, in the key judgments and summary prepared for the policymaker, we cannot say everything about every subject, particularly highly technical subjects.

Teller: He compared the 1974 and 1975 NIEs, and found almost identical passages about the Soviets' lack of capability during the next ten years to prevent the US from a retaliatory strike.

Cherne: While that is probably a correct judgment, the sense of this year's estimate, as he reads it, is different.

Carver: Noted that we were not saying that the Soviets will make no progress or that they will not make important technical advances. On the contrary, we said they will. But we are saying that, based on the lead times required to translate technology into a weapon system and to produce and operationally deploy it, what we see in the evidence indicates that the Soviets will not be able to prevent the US from launching a devastating retaliatory strike during the period of the next ten years.

Galvin: He regarded NIE 11-3/8-75 as eminently better than last year's estimate. As he sees the utility of the estimate, and he hoped his view in this regard was the same as the President's, the conclusions of the NIE should not be the basis for specific policy decisions. They are a frame of reference from which to ask questions, to pursue policy deliberations. Even opposite points of view expressed in the estimate should serve the same purpose. The summary of this estimate is only

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the starting point for a line of policy consideration. If the President reads only the first 9 pages, only the Key Judgments, we should stop sending him the whole document. We should find out whether he reads every page, highlighting key passages as the Board members have done. We must teach him to study the document, not gain impressions from only the Key Judgments. If he reads the entire volume he will have a library of reference, a point of inquiry. From this estimate the President should get the impression that he need not worry tonight, but the estimate will have done its job if he perceives the areas for policy attention. The minority positions, such as the Air Force position in paragraph 123, should cause him to inquire further. He should be satisfied if the estimate spells out the possibilities he may confront regardless of what is judged as most likely. In his view the President will not be brainwashed into reaching conclusions based on a sense of confidence as a result of this document.

Stoertz: He believed Mr. Galvin's comments were very constructive. He would note, not out of any sense of being defensive, that the NIE is redone annually. The stream of information on Soviet programs changes and we have large uncertainties about the most likely developments ten years into the future. Things happen slowly, but each year we summarize new Soviet developments and update the judgments conveyed to the President.

Anderson: Read to the Board a memorandum from Mr. Hyland concerning the PFIAB recommendations for revision of the NIE process. (Attached.) He then returned to the earlier discussion. To summarize, we know what they have now through satellite photography and what they will have during the next two years. Also we know what they are testing.

Stoertz: Noted that in some cases the evidence gives us confidence about what they will have a little more than two years in the future.

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Foster: He believed Admiral Anderson was not pursuing the important issue. It is not the size of the forces. The numbers are not at issue. Qualitative characteristics of the weapons are the important aspects of Soviet capabilities. For example, we don't even know the accuracy of the SS-9. Dr. Latter's alternative method for deriving that accuracy is not acknowledged as an alternative in the NIEs. He asked what the accuracy of the SS-9 was.

Stoertz: We know the accuracy within a range -- [REDACTED] 25X1
[REDACTED] as it appears in the estimate. He asked to return to issue of the conservatism in intelligence nature of estimating, and cited several aspects of our methodology about Soviet ICBM accuracy and performance which he submitted were not conservative: the use of 90 percent confidence intervals, the assumption that successful 2-RV attack tactics were as likely as not, the assumption that present MIRV mechanization problems would be corrected, the assumption that operational forces would in a few years achieve performance approaching system potential. We probably credited them with more capability than they would probably have. He then turned to the matter of Dr. Latter's thesis about the accuracy of the SS-9, pointing out that Dr. Latter's methodology had been weighed by the most knowledgeable analysts in the intelligence community, who found it open to serious challenge and unpersuasive. He described three points which were the basis for the rejection of Dr. Latter's methodology by the Intelligence Community.

Foster: Dr. Latter's methodology had not been disputed by anyone.

Stoertz: He believed Dr. Foster meant to say "refuted," because Dr. Latter's method had been not only disputed but rejected by the Intelligence Community. The prospects are near zero that based on information from remote intelligence sensors we would be able to refute Dr. Latter's hypothesis.

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- Teller: He objected to the use of language in the NIE which approximates that of rigorous scientific discussion, where in fact no scientific discussion could be based on the evidence that is available on such matters as ICBM accuracies. He would like for intelligence to state its conclusions without claims to scientific rigor. The judgment of one group of experts can come out one way, another group can arrive at a different conclusion. If the "evidence" for intelligence conclusions is the technical analysis of experts then the very thorough analysis of one expert should not be set aside.
- Carver: The Intelligence Community does not function in a monolithic way. The mechanism permits surfacing of differences for deliberation and its products contain divergent views. The process does not involve a bureaucratic monolith on the one side of an issue and the rest of the world on the other.
- Teller: He believed this was an exaggeration of the problem he was stating and he did not mean to place it in those terms.
- Stoertz: Referring back to Dr. Teller's comments about the use of differing conclusions of experts, he pointed out that in the analytical process by which ICBM accuracies are derived it was not possible to use differing methodologies, such as Dr. Latter's in a building block approach. Each method stood alone and implied a different final conclusion. He repeated that for the reasons he had mentioned earlier, Dr. Latter's method had been rejected.
- Teller: He explained for the benefit of the Board the impact of the differences in ICBM accuracy which we had been discussing. Insofar as hard target capabilities were concerned, he explained that the accuracy differences had effects comparable to an increase in missile warhead yield by a factor of eight. He regarded it improper to completely set aside a technical judgment (Latter's conclusions) having such a significant impact.

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Stoertz: Explained the charts from the NIE showing the counter-silo capabilities of the alternative Soviet forces we had projected, noting that with the missile characteristics in our high No-SAL force (Force 4) the Soviets could pose a major threat to Minuteman silos about 1977, and with the "best estimate" force in the early 1980s. He also pointed out that this range of threats was encompassed by the range of our uncertainties in our best estimates of Soviet ICBM accuracies and warhead yields. Mr. Stoertz thought that in effect we had presented the more threatening possibilities.

Teller: He believed the chart shown by Mr. Stoertz was interesting, saying that it did indeed show the full range of possibilities.

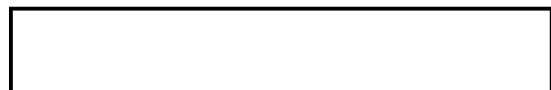
Stoertz: He showed charts from the NIE depicting some of the quantitative comparisons of alternative Soviet force projections with US programed forces, and discussed their implications for perceptions of the strategic balance and Soviet strategic power. He said that these more proximate concerns, expressed in words and charts in the NIE, should not be lost sight of.

Carver and Anderson : Discussed carrying out the instructions in the memorandum from Mr. Hyland previously read to the Board. Mr. Carver proposed that after review of the estimate representatives of the Board and the NIOs should meet, with NSC Staff representatives as observers, to discuss whether further accommodations in the estimating process were needed to accommodate the recommendations of the PFIAB.

3. Following the meeting:

a. Dr. Teller arranged with Mr. Carver to meet on Friday with NIO and CIA representatives to discuss his concerns about the NIE.

b. Mr. Galvin told Ray DeBruler privately he thought NIE 11-3/8-75 was an excellent job.



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Henson R. DeBruler
Assistant National Intelligence Officer
- 11 - for Strategic Programs

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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December 4, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR

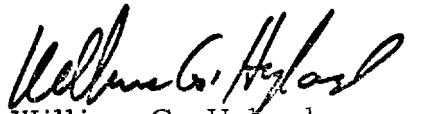
CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN
INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

SUBJECT: PFIAB Recommendations for Revision of the
NIE Process

In a memorandum to the President on August 8 you presented, in behalf of the Board, several recommendations for changing the process through which National Intelligence Estimates are prepared. These recommendations were sent to the Director of Central Intelligence for comment.

I understand that you have received a copy of Director Colby's letter to the President of November 21, 1975 containing his response with specific reference to the Board's comments and suggestions regarding NIE 11-3/8-74, "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict Through 1985."

In his letter, the DCI suggests that the new NIE 11-3/8-75 which has just been published be reviewed by the members of PFIAB to "ascertain the extent to which it overcomes or rectifies what they may have perceived as deficiencies in NIE 11-3/8-74." He further suggests that, after such a review, his representatives meet with members of PFIAB and the NSC Staff to discuss specific courses of action. I would like to request the Board's comment on the DCI's suggestions before presenting the matter to the President.


William G. Hyland
for General Scaucroft

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